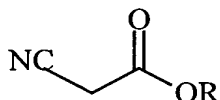


**Claims**

1. Process for the preparation of cyanoacetic acid esters of the general formula

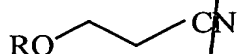
5



I

in which R is an optionally substituted linear or branched C<sub>1-8</sub>-alkyl group or an aryl-C<sub>1-4</sub>-alkyl group, characterized in that an alkoxypropionitrile of the general formula

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II

15 in which R has the meaning given above is oxidized using oxygen or an oxygen-forming reagent to give the desired product in the presence of a catalyst based on lead or one of the transition metals.

2. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that the transition metal catalyst used is a cobalt catalyst.

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3. Process according to Claim 2, characterized in that the cobalt catalyst used is cobalt(II) acetate tetrahydrate.

25 4. Process according to one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the transition metal catalyst is employed in an amount from 0.01 to 10 mol%, relative to the alkoxypropionitrile (II).

5. Process according to at least one of Claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the reaction is carried out at a temperature of 50 to 250 °C.

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6. Process according to at least one of Claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the reaction is carried out in an organic solvent.

add A1